

THE INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CONGRESS.

AFTER an interval of thirty-two years, the International Medical Congress returned to London, and was opened at the Albert Hall on August 6 by Prince Arthur of Connaught on behalf of the King. The number of members ran far into the eighth thousand, as compared with 3182 a generation ago. Before this unprecedented assemblage the foreign delegates, whose names are given below, were presented to Prince Arthur, and each said a few words, the fewest and most appreciated, apparently, coming from Dr. Wu, representing the Chinese Republic. After Sir Edward Grey had welcomed the foreign members, Sir Thomas Barlow, the president of the congress, gave his address, which took the form of a retrospect of the progress attained since 1881. The president recalled the supreme names of Pasteur, Lister, Virchow, Huxley, and Koch, remarking that there were giants in those days; but he showed how their pioneer work has been, and is being, followed up by the many devoted workers of our own time. He took occasion, also, to defend vivisection, especially in this country, from the charges of cruelty and futility commonly brought against them by malice and ignorance.

The general addresses to the congress were delivered on succeeding days by Prof. Chauffard, of Paris, on prognosis in medicine; by Prof. Harvey Cushing, of Harvard, whose discussion of the relation between surgery and medicine was found to contain, as its main feature, the finest defence of experiments on animals that has been heard for many years—a defence supported by the resolution in favour of vivisection which was later passed by the various sections of the congress; by Prof. Ehrlich, of Frankfurt, on pathology nominally, but actually on the most remarkable and beneficent of single achievements in scientific therapeutics that the history of medicine can record; by Prof. W. Bateson, on heredity, a subject which, in his lecture, and in other pathological aspects, received, as was long overdue, much attention at the congress; and by Mr. John Burns, President of the Local Government Board, upon public health. An address on this subject from a determined opponent of vaccination was, perhaps, the most startling novelty of the congress, though the address was well worth hearing, and this aspect of it would fortunately be unknown to most of our foreign guests at the time.

Amid the multitudinous features of the congress, with its hundred or so set discussions and its more than six hundred papers, one subject stands out in clear relief, as would be expected by every reader of Prof. Ehrlich's great address on chemio-therapy, a slightly abbreviated form of which is to be found on p. 620. Those who heard that address were well prepared for the discussion on the duty of the State in regard to syphilis, which was held in the Albert Hall on Saturday at a combined meeting of the sections of dermatology and syphilography, and of forensic

medicine, under the presidency of Sir Malcolm Morris, whose initial part in the public advance we have made in the last two or three weeks must be duly honoured by future historians of public health. The result of Saturday's discussion was the unanimous passage of a resolution calling upon the Governments of all countries represented at the congress to make systematic provision for the diagnosis and treatment of all cases of syphilis not otherwise cared for.

Monday's debate on the treatment of syphilis by salvarsan made clear the real significance of the resolution already passed. The reception accorded to Prof. Ehrlich will never be forgotten by those who were privileged to be present. He introduced the discussion, and was followed by Prof. Wassermann, to whom we owe the invaluable blood reaction for the recognition of syphilis, and by Prof. Hata, of Japan, who helped Ehrlich in the great constructive search which led to salvarsan as the six hundred and sixth synthetic compound tested, and now acknowledged to be, as Prof. Wassermann said, "the mightiest weapon in the whole of medicine." Lieutenant Gibbard, R.A.M.C., reported on the revolution wrought by salvarsan in the treatment of syphilis in the British Army, and other speakers, from all parts of the world, whose total experience must run now into scores of thousands of cases, testified to the power of this remedy. Fate has been cruel, indeed, that young Schaudinn, who found the spirochæte only some seven years ago, thus providing Ehrlich with the living object of his chemical genius, should have been struck down in his early thirties, even before the first molecule of salvarsan came into existence upon a planet which the spirochæte has so long ravaged. It need only here be added that, thanks to Schaudinn, Wassermann, and Ehrlich, the whole problem of syphilis is now utterly revolutionised. The medical profession to-day asks only to be allowed to cure the victims of this infection, thereby preventing it as nothing but cure can ever do. The Royal Commission now demanded will be concerned with that central question, "the provision of diagnosis and treatment"; the horrible and useless measures taken in the past can never again be contemplated, and only unteachable ignorance and prejudice against knowledge can excuse the suggestions already made by two members of the House of Commons in this respect.

Another racial poison, alcohol, was the subject of an important discussion on alcohol and degeneracy, in the section of forensic medicine, introduced by Dr. Laquer, of Wiesbaden. The discussion was valuable, but as one-sided as that on the same subject which was held at the International Eugenics Congress last year, for at neither did the distinguished English author of a familiar report on parental alcoholism appear to defend his unique results on this subject.

The debates on various surgical problems, notably the operative treatment of cerebral tumours, excited great interest, and were doubtless profitable. Sir Victor Horsley had a notable reception

as a pioneer in this field. But when all credit is accorded to the skill and success of surgeons, we must acknowledge that it will be better to use salvarsan early, which means having ever fewer patients in need of it, than to operate, however skilfully, upon cerebral syphilis; and it will be a great day, certainly, though too slowly approaching, when the principles of "chemiotherapy" can be brought to bear upon the cells of malignant tumours, in the brain and anywhere else. The debate on cancer at the congress was undoubtedly disappointing. Devoted, laborious, and valuable work has been done, very notably by Dr. E. F. Bashford, who was the first reporter upon the subject, and his associates of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, but the goal is not yet reached. The work of Dr. Freund, of Vienna, who followed him, and who has found substances in malignant cells which are toxic to normal cells, and *vice versa*, is very promising, and it may be surmised that the views as to specific ferments respectively favouring and disfavouring the chemical processes of the malignant cell, which were advanced by Dr. John Beard, of Edinburgh, some years ago, on the basis of Pasteur's fundamental stereo-chemical discovery, are nearer the line of effective advance than was at the time supposed. Prof. Ehrlich, who worked at cancer in past years, may perhaps return to the subject now and surpass himself. Meanwhile, the results of surgery, and very notably of radium, that astonishing agent, which certainly produces cancer under some conditions, and certainly cures it under others, are very welcome, and improve rapidly every year.

Prof. Simon Flexner could not come, and so we did not hear from his own lips about his work on the ultra-microscopic organism of infantile paralysis. But there was an important debate on "filter-passers," and the time is coming when biology and our views of protoplasm and living matter in general will have to face the strange results of recent research into this subject.

On Wednesday, with a lofty appeal for peace in the name of medical science, from the lips of the president, the congress was brought to a close. Its record, its numbers, its knowledge, have never been equalled, and will most surely and soon be utterly surpassed; but mankind will have ceased to care at all about health and disease, sanity and madness, life and death, before the visit of Prof. Ehrlich, the merciful records and the illimitable promise of his creative genius, at the International Medical Congress of London, 1913, are forgotten, or without homage, wonder, and gratitude remembered. C. W. SALEEBY.

The following is the official list of delegates from foreign Governments to the congress:—United States of America, Dr. William Thayer; Austria, Prof. Ritter von Haberler; Argentina, Dr. Eliseo Segura; Belgium, Prof. Heger; Brazil, Prof. Marcos Cavalcanti; China, Dr. Wu; Cuba, Dr. Aristides Agramonte; Denmark, Dr. Madsen; France, M. Landouzy; Germany, His Excellency Prof. v. Schjerning; Guatemala, Dr. Azurdia; Holland, Dr. Rijnberk; Hungary,

Prof. Emil de Grosz; Italy, Prof. Bianchi; Japan, Dr. Takamina; Mexico, Dr. Jose Larumbé; Monaco, Dr. Caillaud; Nicaragua, Dr. Alejandro Cesar; Norway, Prof. Dr. Uchermann; Portugal, Dr. Luiz de Freitas Viegas; Russia, General Dr. Rapschewsky; Servia, Dr. Subbotitch; Spain, Dr. Recasius; Switzerland, Prof. Sahli; Sweden, Prof. Essen Möller.

On August 6, in connection with the congress, the Royal College of Surgeons conferred its honorary fellowship upon Prof. R. Bastianelli, Rome; Prof. A. Bier, Berlin; Mr. F. D. Bird, Melbourne; Dr. G. W. Crile, Cleveland, U.S.A.; Dr. Harvey Cushing, Harvard; Dr. von Eiselsberg, Vienna; Dr. E. Fuchs, Vienna; Dr. H. Hartmann, Paris; Prof. W. Korte, Berlin; Dr. W. J. Mayo, Rochester, U.S.A.; Dr. A. Monprofit, Paris; Dr. J. B. Murphy, Chicago; Dr. J. Nicolaysen, Christiania; Dr. F. J. Shepherd, Montreal; and Prof. T. Tuffier, Paris.

At the closing meeting it was announced that the Permanent Commission of the International Congress had unanimously decided to accept the invitation of the Bavarian Government and of the town and University of Munich to hold the next Congress of Medicine in that town in 1917.

The commission further accepted the recommendations of the committees appointed to award the congress prizes as follows:—

(a) The Moscow prize, awarded to Prof. Charles Richet, of Paris, for his work on anaphylaxis.

(b) The Paris prize, awarded to Prof. A. von Wassermann, of Berlin, for his work on experimental therapy and on immunity.

(c) The Hungary prize, awarded to Prof. A. E. Wright, of London, for his work on anaphylaxis.

The committee of the Permanent Commission has been elected as follows:—

President.—Prof. Dr. Friedrich von Müller, of Munich (president-elect for the eighteenth congress).

Vice-Presidents.—M. Calman Müller, of Budapest (president of the sixteenth congress); Sir Thomas Barlow, of London (president of the seventeenth congress).

Secretary-General.—M. H. Burger, of Amsterdam. Assistant Secretary.—D. Ph. van der Haer, of The Hague.

Member.—M. L. Dejae, of Liège (president of the International Association of the Medical Press).

The following resolutions sent up by the sections of congress will be considered by the commission:—

(A) That, sensible of the ravages wrought by syphilis in the health of the community, and deploring the inadequacy of existing facilities for checking its dissemination, the International Medical Congress calls upon the Governments of all the countries here represented—

(1) To institute a system of confidential notification of the disease to a sanitary authority, wherever such notification does not already obtain.

(2) To make systematic provision for the diagnosis and treatment of all cases of syphilis not otherwise provided for. (Submitted by the combined sections of dermatology and syphilography and of forensic medicine.)

(B) (a) That the section is of opinion that beri-beri among natives who live principally on rice is brought about by the continuous and too exclusive use of rice submitted to a too complete milling, which removes the cortical and subcortical layers of the grain.

(b) The section urges all authorities charged with the health of native communities to restrain by every means in their power the use of this rice in the dietary of coolies.

(c) In view of the proved non-infectiousness of beri-beri the section suggests that all port and sanitary

authorities should abolish foreign quarantine and other restrictive measures against this disease.

(d) The section resolves that the malady known hitherto under the name of Malta fever shall in future be named "undulant fever." (Submitted by the section of tropical medicine and hygiene.)

(C) That this congress records its conviction that experiments on living animals have proved of the utmost service to medicine in the past, and are indispensable to its future progress. That, accordingly, while strongly deprecating the infliction of unnecessary pain, it is of opinion alike in the interests of man and of animals that it is not desirable to restrict competent persons in the performance of such experiments. (Submitted by various sections.)

THE CONTINUATION OF MILNE'S WORK IN SEISMOLOGY.

A WELL-INFORMED writer in *The Times* of August 7 has insisted on the importance of securing the continuity of the late Prof. Milne's great scheme of seismological observation and research. Milne himself always fought strenuously against his own undertaking being absorbed and lost in any international scheme. It is true that in connection with the international system there are some admirably equipped laboratories, furnished with a variety of instruments of extreme delicacy and sensitiveness; but the establishment of one of these is so costly an undertaking that such laboratories can never become numerous. Milne's aim was to secure a great number of seismological stations, scattered as widely as possible over the globe, each furnished with instruments of the same pattern, the records of which would be strictly comparable. The practical results which have been secured by Milne's scheme have shown that the comparatively simple type of apparatus which he advocated has furnished just such an observational basis for research as is necessary. Milne, at the outset, saw in the British colonies and dependencies the means for a wide extension of his scheme—though he by no means limited his efforts within the Empire. It would, indeed, be a disgrace, as well as a misfortune, to British science if the great undertaking originated by Milne were to suffer dislocation, or to be lost by absorption in any other scheme; and, at the same time, no more worthy monument to Milne's enterprise could be imagined than the maintenance and development of the system of observations to which he devoted his genius and energy, and for which he received little practical encouragement during his lifetime.

It is a very fortunate circumstance that the British Association is holding a meeting so shortly after Milne's lamented death, for no time must be lost if his invaluable organisation is to be rescued from the ruin which is threatened by the loss of its master-spirit. From the year 1841 onward, the association has been the nursing mother of seismological science in this country, and has helped Mallet, and afterwards Milne, by contributions from its funds, and especially by publication of their results. Milne was always ready gratefully to acknowledge the great

aid afforded to him by the association, and devoted much of his time during the last year of his life to drawing up a valuable index to the numerous contributions to seismology scattered through seventy-two volumes of the association's reports. This index is now in type, and will be presented at the forthcoming Birmingham meeting. It may be hoped that on this occasion a means may be found for consummating the great aid which the association has always furnished to seismological science, by inaugurating an effort to place Milne's system of observation and research on a sound and permanent basis. It may be suggested that as a national system of meteorological observation has been evolved from the meteorological committees of the British Association, a national seismological scheme may, in like manner, be developed from the association's committees on the subject.

On August 8 a second letter appeared in *The Times* from the president of the Royal Society, strongly urging the importance of continuing Milne's organisation, and making it a national undertaking. Sir Archibald Geikie, besides bearing eloquent testimony to Milne's genius and enthusiasm as a scientific worker and his loveableness as a man, is able to quote from a letter just received from Prince Galitzin, the president of the International Seismological Association, in which it is asserted that Milne "through his most important investigations set seismology on a firm scientific basis, founded upon instrumental observation," that "he can duly be considered as the real founder and promoter of this new and important branch of geophysics," and that the continuation and development of his great work "would be the best monument to his memory."

J. W. J.

THE ULTIMA THULE OF POLYNESIA.¹

EASTER ISLAND, so called because of its discovery by the Dutchman Roggeween on Easter Day, 1722, presents several as yet unanswered problems in ethnology and linguistics. One of these is the provenance of the gigantic stone statues found in the island, another the decipherment of the singular incised tablets which appear to show a form of writing or hieroglyph, though written characters are found nowhere else east of Java. A third problem, the origin and settlement of the present population, or rather of the generation which is now so rapidly passing, is less difficult, and is that which Mr. Churchill has set himself the task of investigating in the present volume.

In his former book on the Polynesian wanderings (see *NATURE*, September 21, 1911, p. 381), the author discussed the entry into the Pacific of the primitive Polynesians, whom he called the proto-Samoans, and their settlement in the region he defined as Nuclear Polynesia, comprising the island-groups surrounding Samoa, and including

¹ "Easter Island. The Rapanui Speech and the Peopling of South-east Polynesia." By William Churchill. Pp. iv+340. (Washington: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1912.)